

Calligraphy by Dr. Moafak Dib Helaihel

Knowledge is light “*Al-‘ilm Noor* “ is a common Arabic saying expressing the centrality of learning to the human experience.

The Arabs of the Middle Ages translated and commented on the texts of the ancient Greek philosophers. Arab philosophers such as *Ibn Rushd* (Averroes) are credited with linking Medieval Europe to the classical works of Plato and Aristotle. Given the Arabs familiarity with Classical philosophy, it is no wonder that for the Arabs as for the Greek philosophers knowledge is not limited to a grasp of the physical world but encompasses also an understanding of oneself, morality, virtue, and the purpose of life. With this knowledge Man is able to craft for himself an enlightened life based on principle.

Al-‘ilm includes both sacred and worldly knowledge. The Arabs, like the Greeks see knowledge as a means to virtuous living.

The saying is here depicted in the classic *Kufic* script. This is the oldest Arabic script that developed in Kufa (modern day Iraq) in the 7th century A.D.

The form of the calligraphy mirrors the meaning. Knowledge of Arabic unravels this complex, maze-like image to reveal the message. Still, the interwoven calligraphy demands close examination even from those literate in Arabic. This inspection brings forth in the viewer a longing for discovery.

The saying is repeated several times in the design. Each iteration proceeds from a central point and is rotated or mirrored to complete the design. This layout echoes the different fields of knowledge, which are interrelated and yet distinct -- each discipline providing a window to Truth.